

## **I Won't Survive the Holidays wk 3: A Hope Overflow**

<http://OakbrookChurch.com> Morgan Young 12.16.12

Well, glad you're here for our third week in our series *I Won't Survive the Holidays*. The point of which is, we won't just *survive* the holidays--because of Jesus, we will thrive during the holidays, and we will be people who in spite of holiday stress, we will *leak* joy, peace and hope everywhere we go!

In this series we've been learning from Romans 15:13

**I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in Him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

*Romans 15:13 NLT*

Last week Mark talked about peace. And He shared the biblical principle that Peace is trusting God can handle what you can't.

And 2 weeks ago, he shared that Joy is found in Who you're with (Jesus), not what you have.

And we're talking about joy, peace and hope because something about this holiday that is supposed to revolve around the King of kings in a manger-- can easily become about the king of couponing endless deals and surviving overwhelming schedules.

(selah)

Because I love knowing what you're thinking and getting you involved with my talk, I put a post out on Facebook Monday and asked, "What does the stress and hectic-ness of the holiday look like to you?"

Facebook Replies:

- 1) Unnecessary participation in things God doesn't care about.
- 2) Stress of loved ones that matter the most that are missing. Death leaves holes that cannot be filled yet at the holidays seem much bigger than the rest of the year. (30 yrs ago)
- 3) Trying to meet the expectations of others instead of focusing on the needs of others.
- 4) Christmas is so commercialized these days. It is so difficult to get into the mood when it is all about spending. That is so stressful, especially when funds are tight.
- 5) Pressure to make everything perfect, since it's such a special time and it only comes once a year.

6) (refreshing) Every day is Christmas to me so I do my best to not get caught up in the commercial aspect of a month-long buying frenzy.

7) Trying to be everything to everyone.

8) A very tightly scheduled, day-by-day attack to get everything done for four solid weeks.

And in the midst of all those pressures, through Jesus, there is joy, peace & hope. But as I've thought things we hope for, I've wondered if we hope too small.

For instance right now if I said, "Quick! Tell me your hopes!"

You might think things like:

I hope this talk is entertaining.

Hope it applies to me.

Really hope it ends on time... ;-)

If you think about what we hope for most days, it's like we hope in a 5 foot radius of ourselves:

Hope our job isn't insane today.

Hope our kids stay healthy--the month is crazy enough already.

Hope we'll have more money than month.

Hope we get what we want for Christmas.

Hope this idiot in the car in front of me would stop texting because the light's green!

Think about it--most of our hopes are not big, way down the road, I-really-need-God, hopes.

They're right here in front of us. They're 5 foot radius hopes.

And that's true because the stress and pressures of life have a way of pushing in on us. (Pressure means "pressing in or on.")

And that's what it feels like during December because all this STUFF feels like it's right here--all up in our grill:

- The parties to get to
- Presents to get
- Worrying if they'll like the presents
- The in-laws (God love em!)
- The extra financial stress
- School programs

Life's pressures, amplified by the Christmas season--feel like they're right here, inside a 5 foot radius, pushing in on us.

Do you feel it?

(Selah)

Here's some powerful news: God, who is the source of hope, is here for us inside our 5 foot radius.

Let's look at Psalm 61:

O God, listen to my cry!

Hear my prayer!

<sup>2</sup> From the ends of the earth,

I cry to you for help

when my heart is overwhelmed.

Lead me to the towering rock of safety,

<sup>3</sup> for you are my safe refuge,

a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.

<sup>4</sup> Let me live forever in your sanctuary,

safe beneath the shelter of your wings!

Psalm 61:1-4 NLT

This passage, like so many others, tells us that God is with us when our world presses in on us. God doesn't just give us hope--He gives us His presence--He gives us Himself---the GOD OF HOPE.

As it says in verse 2, "*When I'm overwhelmed.*" Anyone feel overwhelmed?

In other words--when it feels like all the pressures of the holidays are within a 5 foot radius pushing in...

Verse 2-3 tells us that God is a towering rock of safety, a safe refuge, a fortress.

These are all promises of protection from the pressures of life. These words are HOPE for us within our 5 foot radius.

So our God--the source of hope--is a safe refuge--a fortress--a safe place. He is our hope. We don't *conjure up* hope--God IS hope.

And *how* did the Psalmist access this fortress, this safe place? (Verse 2)

He cried out!

Let me say that another way--a way that we Americans hate--because we take pride in doing things ourselves:

The psalmist said,

*"I can't do this alone. I need help...God."*

So a simple question:

As we feel like the season is pushing in on us, have we admitted to the God that already knows it--that we need help?

I sometimes wonder if the God who has promised to be our rock, our safe place, our shelter--wonders why we don't ask for His help, more?

This simple truth is--relying on God--crying out to God--accessing His shelter, is one of the ways we thrive through the holidays.

A great way to thrive through the holidays is by daily admitting, "You are God. I am not....Help!"

Hope becomes real in our life, when we trust that God will be there for us.

In Romans 15:13 (and throughout the Bible) it clearly says that there are things for God to do and things for US to do.

In this passage, God's job is to deliver joy, peace & hope.  
*Our* job is to trust that He'll do it!.

Our job is to call out to God--trust his Word. We have to trust that He will catch us, then we fall back into His strength.

A picture of trust becoming hope is the old "trust fall" team building exercise. Take a look...(video)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daTgQzPddYk>

*I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Romans 15:13 NLT*

We will be filled with joy, peace and OVERFLOWING with hope--why?

*"Because you trust in Him."*

So a really huge question is:

Do we fully trust God? Or like in the video, are we putting your foot back?

Do we fully trust He will be our sanctuary, our rock, our hope? Or do we think we have to be those things?

One way to know if we're putting our foot back is to be in tune with how much we're stressing...  
worrying...  
losing sleep...  
getting worked up...  
trying to figure "it" out by our self...

Worry & stress are often symptoms of not fully trusting God.

God's job is to catch us--to come through on all His promises in His Word.

Our job is to trust that He will.

As we trust, God provides joy, peace, hope.

(Selah)

Alright. So we looked at the first half of Psalm 61 and saw that God is with us here & now, and brings hope to all the things pushing in on us within our 5 foot radius. But that's not the whole story--it's just half the story of hope.

Let's look at the second half of Psalm 61:

For you have heard my vows, O God.

You have given me an inheritance reserved for those who fear your name.

<sup>6</sup> Add many years to the life of the king!

May his years span the generations!

<sup>7</sup> May he reign under God's protection forever.

May your unfailing love and faithfulness watch over him.

<sup>8</sup> Then I will sing praises to your name forever

as I fulfill my vows each day. Psalm 61:5-8 NLT

Here the psalmist chooses to change his focus. In the second half of this psalm, he looks beyond the pressures of his 5 foot radius, and focuses on God's eternal view of life!

(Not looking here [gesture]...looking way into the future...)

In verse 5 He turns his thoughts from his daily struggles to an "inheritance" from God.

In other words, what the psalmist does here, is turn away from all the pressing issues today-- and focuses on what God has done for him. This inheritance includes:

- Jesus on the cross--saving us.
- The Holy Spirit being with us no matter what.
- Life to the full.
- Playing a part in God's plan to redeem this world.
- Eternal perfect life w/God on the other side.

And I love how the psalmist ties our current hope and future hope together in verse 8:

<sup>8</sup> Then I will sing praises to your name forever (eternal)

as I fulfill my vows each day. (5 feet)

Today's big idea about hope, comes from this verse:

**The hope of Jesus is from 5 feet to infinity.**

There is this theme that we see woven through Scripture:

The world is always pushing in on us; Jesus is always drawing us out!  
(The world pushing IN, Jesus drawing us OUT)

Jesus draws us out mentally to an eternal focus--reminding us that Jesus conquered death on the cross, so our physical death is not the end, but a beginning. And we should look forward to that!

And drawing us out, physically, away from our problems and into His mission of serving, building the Kingdom and redeeming this world--actually DOING things outside of our 5 foot radius to be hands & feet of Jesus in this world.

The world pushes IN on us, Jesus draws us OUT into His mission.

So here's a question for us: What are we hoping for that's outside of our 5 foot radius?

Do we need God to do anything that's not just for US?

Do we hope for a cause that God cares about that has nothing to do with our well-being?

Do we hope for things that have nothing to do with our day-to-day concerns within the 5 foot radius of our life?

Next week a group of people from our church, is heading to the streets of New York to provide food to people in need. I am positive that right now, they are hoping and counting on God for big things.

They are hoping for God to work outside their 5 foot radius.

The world pushes in on us; Jesus draws us out. What are we hoping God does through us that has nothing to do with our well-being?

(Great prayer opportunity if we don't what that is!)

(Selah)

One of the ways Jesus draws us out, is like we see in Psalm 61--He calls to see things from an eternal perspective.

We look up & beyond today's pressures into the future reality that God eventually makes all things straight and right and this world and all its junk will fade away.

In the future:

No cancer, no death, no infidelity, no addiction, no lack of money, no loneliness, no depression, no low self-esteem, no physical pain & disease ...

The hope of Jesus is from 5 feet to infinity, which means at some point this earthly life stops-- and a new unbelievable problem-free life kicks in.

Let's check how Peter artfully expresses the reality of hope from 5 feet to infinity. And he will elaborate on the *inheritance* we read about in the second half of Psalm 61:

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation,<sup>4</sup> and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.<sup>5</sup> And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

<sup>6</sup> So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. 1 Peter 1:3-6 nlt

Peter says to us, "We live with great expectation," because Heaven is amazing beyond comprehension. It's not boring--it's priceless.

He said we live with great expectation because no matter what happens here, our eternal inheritance won't spoil, won't expire--it will be there---and we can bet your life on that truth because Jesus gave His life for that truth!

And notice what Peter says in verse 5, "And through your faith."

Again, because we fully TRUST God--because we're not putting our foot back, but fully falling into the arms of God--*that* is when we unleash God's protection, power, salvation--- it is our faith that gives God the green light to unleash all the promises that He LOVES to shower us with!

Peter sums it up in verse 6: "So be truly glad. (WHY?) There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while."

Peter says that the hope of Jesus is from 5 feet to infinity. He says we have to endure many trials today (within our 5 foot radius)--but down the road (eternity, infinity) there are no trials.

Hope from 5 feet to infinity means that to live in the way of Jesus is to live in 2 time zones-- the here-and-now AND the yet-to-come.

So He wants our attention on Him amidst all the junk pressing on us within our 5 foot radius. AND He wants us to look expectantly and excitedly to a perfect world yet to come.

The hope of Jesus is from 5 feet to eternity.

(Selah)

Recently Sandra and I somehow lost our minds and started a new business downtown. It got "real" when she quit her a job a few months ago.

(Just for the record, Sandra doesn't work just because it's *fun*; it's a necessity for us.)

I can't tell you how many times we looked at each other the last few months and said, "*What in the heck are we doing?*" "*Are we really doing this?*"

The days we spent trying to get this thing off the ground were long and taxing. Stressful. (For Sandra the days are still long. And sometimes stressful)

We're barely off the ground; we've been open just 3 weeks and a day.

So far it's been great, but who knows what January will bring. We're in this new scary world of paying large monthly expenses and a new concept for us: "making payroll."

Making payroll--that means people, families-- are depending on us.

Did I mention we've never started a business before?

Did I mention we're figuring this all out on-the-fly?

Would you like to know why Sandra and I are NOT basket cases right now?

Do you know what's kept our sanity these last three months?

Hope. Hope of Jesus from 5 feet to infinity.

In the day-to-day very real stress and pressures of getting this business off the ground, it calmed my soul knowing that the Holy Spirit was with us, --like the first half of Psalm 61-- being our rock, our shelter, our sanctuary.

And there were moments when, as I say, I was talking Sandra off the ledge,--it was the peace of eternity that got us through it.

I said, "Honey--the worst thing that happens is this doesn't work. We pay off our losses, shake the dust off and move on."

I could say that and mean that because our hope is not in that business.

Ultimately our hope lies in all the promises of an inheritance Jesus gave to us. And that makes anything here on earth--even this new little business--the success or failure of it-- small potatoes.

(pause)

And then there's Sandy Hook Elementary...

Unspeakable evil.

Unfathomable grief.

And reporters ask, "What do you say to the parents?"

And I remembered two years and a week ago. I was at a Christmas party and got a call. Through a tragedy, a family in our church had lost their only daughter...

And that same question soon hit me, "Morgan, what do you say to the parents?"

First of all, it's not what we say, it's what we do.

And what we do is we cry with them.

We grieve with them.

We hurt with them.

And when you do get around to words--it sounds very similar to the truth of today...

I saw a family--the unexpected death of a daughter--a sister--came crashing inside the 5 foot radius of their lives.

And moment-to-moment, hour-by-hour, day by day it was the hope of Jesus who sustained them. Like Psalm 61, He was their refuge, their strength, their hope. Hope wasn't something they conjured up--it was the presence of a Holy Father whose name is *God of Hope*.

And when it came to coming to terms with the funeral--the finality of it all--their focus moved away from the here and now to the hope of the yet to come.

And I reminded them that she is now living perfectly in our "yet-to-come!"

Friends--I saw that family go through their worst December ever--by focusing on the hope of Jesus moment-by-moment in the day-to-day...

AND by focusing with great expectation--on a perfect future in eternity--knowing their daughter had already received an amazing inheritance.

The hope of Jesus from 5 feet to infinity isn't just a catchy phrase. It's the Truth that sustained a family--it's the God of Hope who will carry us through anything--no matter how unspeakable the tragedy...

(Selah)

I want to share one more post from my Facebook question.

A friend I've known since high school, with the soul of a poet wrote this:

"I work in retail. All day long I'm besieged with customers asking for the impossible:  
*'It's all gone, you're too late, sorry.'*

Many leave upset that they couldn't find what they were looking for.

It's not here I think... it's not in this store or in your bag or online.

It's in a star pointing east.

This present will always arrive on time, wrapped *not* in shiny paper but in swaddling cloth.

His name is Jesus and his first cries will shift time.

You could hear it over the din. If you stop, breathe and listen."

Hope...was born. Hope was laid in a food trough.

Hope's very pregnant teenaged mother road in on a donkey.

There was not even an aspirin for her delivery.

No bed. No doctor. No antiseptic.

But Hope was swaddled in strips of cloth.

And 30 years after, Hope was stripped, unclothed... crucified.

To usher in Hope--today--for the right now, up-close pressures we're dealing with.

To make a future that we can look forward to with great expectation.

But hope won't just be given to us.

We must trust. We must believe.

We must trust and believe that this Infant King can catch us--we must believe we can fall back into His arms without putting our foot back to catch ourselves.

Believe fully. Trust fully.

This Infant King grew into a Man and said to us:

I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

John 5:24 NLT

And so a simple question I ask of you...

***Do you know the God of Hope?***

So do you know God? Not *about* Him--but do you *know* Him?

If your answer is, "*I'm not sure,*" then listen...

Do you believe that Jesus' words in John 5:24 are true?

Do you believe that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary?

Do you believe Jesus is the sinless son of God?

Do you believe Jesus gave up His life to pay for your sins--past & future sins?

In a moment, I'll ask all of us to pray--if you're so inclined.

If you're in a relationship w/Jesus, just thank Him, love Him, be with Him...

If you'd like to be in a relationship, follow these prompts on the screen...

*Tell God you believe He is who He says He is.*

*Thank God for sending Jesus to pay for your sins.*

*Ask Him to forgive your sins.*

*Ask Jesus to lead your life.*

If you're not sure about God--take a risk and try praying asking this God to make Himself known to you if He does exist.

(( 60 sec's quiet prayer time, reflective music ))

Prayout